RICHLAND, WASH — Washington State officially has a new state record walleye holder. Andy Donabauer, 34, of East Wenatchee, Wash., broke the record after his walleye, caught on the Tri Cities stretch of the Columbia River, weighed in at an incredible 23.12 pounds, shattering the previous record of 20.32 pounds set in 2014.

Wildlife officials have already confirmed the catch, which is only the second walleye over 20 pounds to have been caught in the U.S. since 1988. The fish measured 38 1/2 inches from tip to tail with a girth of 25 3/4 inches. A state biologist was present when the fish was measured.

Incredibly, Donabauer, a civil engineer, wasn’t targeting walleye on this day.

“Honestly, I was kokanee fishing,” said Donabauer, who was unaware that kokanee are not native to this stretch of the Columbia River. “I read on the Internet that there may be kokanee down here and I’ve been trying to get really good at kokanee fishing, so I headed down here and did my thing.

“Obviously I didn’t catch a kokanee, but I’m pretty good at fishing so catching a big fish isn’t anything new to me. The walleye record is nice. I’ll put it on my wall in my room or something.”

Donabauer, drifting the river in his 1976 Valco 12’ Aluminum Starcraft with a 10hp Evinrude motor, was long-lining a Mack’s Lure Sling Blade™ Dodger and Smile Blade® Kokanee Hoochie setup when the monster walleye, somehow, grabbed his line.

“The darn thing was seconds away from ripping my rod out from the duct tape holder thing I rigged up on the back of my dingy,” Donabauer said. “But I’m pretty quick, so I grabbed it and just fought that thing pretty hard for a good two or three hours.

“It wasn’t really a big deal, honestly.”

Mack’s Lure, who is in the process of creating a replica mount of the fish for Donabauer, is excited about the record. It’s one of several state and world record fish that have been caught on the fishing tackle manufacturer’s product line.

“We’re extremely happy for Andy,” Mack’s Lure President Bob Schmidt said on April Fools Day. “It’s definitely the first record walleye we’ve had caught on our kokanee gear, and especially in the Columbia, but that’s just another reason why our gear is so versatile and effective. We also feel bad for everyone still reading that fell for this joke on April first.”
Part one of my Fishing Lake Roosevelt series aimed to give the reader an overview of Lake Roosevelt. In part two, my goal was to detail the rainbow fishery and specific strategies for “Reeling in Some Bows.” This segment, I hope, imparts a few techniques for targeting Kokanee on Roosevelt.

Lake Roosevelt is a National Park, which has 130 miles of pristine, scenic recreational water. It stretches from British Columbia to the Grand Coulee Dam, and is fed by the Columbia, Spokane and Sanpoil Rivers, along with other tributaries. This fishery is co-managed by the Spokane Tribe, Colville Tribe and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). They have done an excellent job of protecting and enhancing the Roosevelt Reservoir.

Currently, there are 63 net pens in the Reservoir. Pen locations range from north to south — from Kettle Falls to Keller Ferry. These net pens are operated by a group of volunteers and the WDFW Sherman Creek Hatchery. The tribes and WDFW have been very successful in establishing a fantastic rainbow trout fishery, but they are also invested in boosting the kokanee numbers by enhancing the wild population and planting a sterile kokanee strain. Last year alone, over 700,000 sterile kokanee were released and very few of those fish have shown up in the creel.

Several factors have been working against the effort, however. Water fluctuation, the species itself (which has the urge to go to salt water) and heavy predation have all combined to create a challenging planting. The good news is, though, that no one is giving up. Work is being done to provide solutions to these challenges and this year another attempt to plant kokanee will hopefully result in better success.

The kokanee in Lake Roosevelt are the coveted catch within the reservoir, however often times, they’re the most difficult to come by. It is primarily a wild fish population that waxes and wains, depending on conditions experienced during their life cycle. They have an abundant source of food and, when conditions are right, can easily grow into the 4- to 5-pound range.

If you want to target these trophy kokanee and you have a boat, the following tips should help bring you some success on the water. In the following sections, I’ll discuss depth, speed and lure presentation, which I call the “Holy Trinity” of successful fishing.

DEPTH

In the late fall, winter, and early spring, when the water is cool, trolling boards or side planers are an awesome advantage because usually the game fish can be caught in the top 10- to 25-feet of water. With the use of equipment such as trolling and planer boards, you can troll your line along the shallow shoreline, spacing your lines at multiple depths using weights or diving lures.

This method also enables the angler to space presentations different distances apart, covering more water. No planer boards? Try using a Mack’s Lure Double D™ Dodger. The Double D™ not only has the proven traditional dodger action, but also delivers its patent-pending stop-and-go action to your lure. With five attachment points, you can spread your lines while doubling as a side planer.

The added advantage of a two-pole endorsement allows you to play with some trial and error options to hopefully discover the lure, depth, speed or presentation that’s working that particular day.

When the fish are in the top strata, leaded line also does very well. Downriggers are effective, too, as is long-lining a lure with a light banana or snap weight. As the water warms, the fish follow the cool water and gravitate to the lower depths or areas of cool water flow. In the summer, the kokanee can be found as deep as 100 feet.

TROLLING SPEED

Targeting kokanee calls for slower speeds. Typically, a good speed for kokanee is in the 1.0- to 1.4-knot range, though you can even fish slower than that. It is also dependent on your lure and how active the fish are. Speed up or slow down to find that magic tempo. Bear in mind that it may change as the day brightens, water warms or the fish decide to mess with your head, which is a common occurence.
When it comes to speed, I want to know my lure-through-water-speed exactly. Yes, your electronics and GPS will measure your speed, as do some other high-tech methods, but they’re not correct indicators of lure through water speed.

One of the most important pieces of fishing equipment on my boat is the Luhr Speed Indicator. Most of the time, that indicator speed will be at odds with the high-tech readouts. A difference as little as 0.2-knots may determine a successful day of catching versus a day of sight seeing. If you get frustrated and can’t hook a kokanee, speed up. You will most likely catch a nice rainbow as a consolation.

LURE, COLOR & PRESENTATION

Kokanee are the most challenging game fish to catch on Roosevelt. Their favorite fare seems to be the Wedding Ring® or the Pee Wee™ Hoochie setups. Use a two hook set up with a single or treble trailing hook, tipping it with a peice of pink corn or a maggot. Try running a Sling Blade™ Dodger in front of them for added movement.

My favorite setup is a pink and orange Wedding Ring® spinner behind a Sling Blade™ 6” UV Pink. The Cha Cha® 1.5” Kokanee Squidder behind a Sling Blade™ 6” Nickel Pink also produces well.

And the best part about the Sling Blade™? You can bend it to change its action through the water. Try different dodger sizes to adjust the lure action. Mack’s Lure offers the Double D™ Dodger in 4.4” and 7.6” while the Sling Blade™ is available in 4”, 6” and 9” sizes.

Another tip to be aware of is to shorten or lengthen your leader to slow or hasten the action of your lure — “some like it hot, some like it cold.” If you’re looking for even more action to your lure, replace your blade with a Wiggle Hoochie™ Bill, now available in clean and a high UV option.

Green, pink and orange lures and blades seem to be the most effective colors twelve months out of the year. That being said, it is always wise to give some other color combinations a try if you are not getting the strikes you want. Give brown tones, chrome, pruple and black a try, too. UV is always a great setup and, in deeper water, glow lure and beads often give you an advantage. Often times, water color, temperature and depth will dictate the winning color of the day.

I wish you the best of luck in your pursuit of these sometimes elusive kokanee. I hope these tips will bring you some success. If you decide to make a trip to Lake Roosevelt, I suggest that you read my prior Roosevelt articles in the February and March issues of the Mack Attack Magazine, which can be found at MacksLure.com on the Mack Attack Archives section. Those articles hold some key information on the reservoir and various fishing techniques for a variety of game fish held within this amazing fishery. For more information, join me at my next seminar on Thursday, April 5 at the Spokane Valley Sportsman’s Warehouse.

INGREDIENTS

• 4 walleye filets
• 2 eggs
• 1 tbsp water
• 1/3 cup dry bread crumbs
• 1/3 cup mashed potato flakes
• 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
• 1 tsp seasoned salt

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat an oven to 450 F; grease a baking sheet.
2. Beat the eggs and water together in a bowl until smooth; set aside. Combine the bread crumbs, potato flakes, and Parmesan cheese in a separate bowl with seasoned salt until evenly mixed. Dip the walleye filets into the beaten egg, then press into the bread crumb mixture. Place onto the prepared baking sheet.
3. Bake in the preheated oven until the fish is opaque in the center and flakes easily with a fork. Approximately 15–20 min.
I have to chuckle a little bit when I recall the first time I held one in my hand and took a really good look at it. “Holy mackerel,” I said to myself, “the guy that designed this hook must have had a couple beers too many if he expects this thing to catch fish.”

Well, friends, it wasn’t the first time my initial thoughts have been dead wrong. And this time they were big time haywire. The hook designers for Mustad knew what they were doing when they developed the strange looking hooks I’m talking about. So did the folks at Mack’s Lure when they combined these hooks with the Smile Blade® to create a lure that has been putting fish in the boat all over the map since its introduction.

What the purposely bent Super Slow Death Hook, the Smile Blade® and the beads are designed to do, you see, is come rotating and wiggling along the river bottom like a wounded or dying baitfish, almost knowing it’s likely to get gobbled. And, again, that’s what’s been happening since it was introduced.

One of those places the Smile Blade® Super Slow Death Rig has proved itself is on the Columbia River. If you’re up to date with current fishing prospects of this big river, you’re aware that it is now known for something besides the migratory species. In recent years, it has been kicking out some of the largest walleye caught anywhere in the world.

If that doesn’t get your attention, you should be aware that they Columbia is now also producing some of the West’s best action for smallmouth bass. And all of this has pretty much transpired despite the efforts of fish management officials in both Oregon and Washington to not let it happen.

This Slow Death hooks is well named. I had a chance recently to get more details on just how successful this Smile Blade® lure has been with some of the anglers who’ve been clobbering fish with it.

One of the guys I talked to was Bob Schmidt, president of Mack’s Lure. In the past, it hasn’t been uncommon for me to find some of the top dogs of the country’s major lure makers who were spending more time on the golf course than on the water. That’s not how Schmidt operates. If he tells you one of his products does this or that, you can believe it.

One of the things Schmidt pointed out was that the Smile Blade® Super Slow Death Rig is different from the original Slow Death option. For one, the rig now has a slightly larger profile than the original. The hook itself is also built with a heavier metal. It was the outstanding success of the original rig that brought these changes about, and it didn’t take long to discover that this lure clobbered big hogs.

Bobby Loomis, Mack’s Lure’s Sales and Marketing Director, says experienced anglers, especially on waters where the walleye run big like the Columbia, are especially taking advantage of the Super Slow Death Rig.

“The original Slow Death hook is a fine wire design, designed to be fished on the bottom with minimal bait so it rotates like something dying on the bottom as it is slow trolled,” Loomis said.

But, as Bobby pointed out, world class walleye fisheries like those you’ll find in the Columbia and Snake Rivers, for example, require the Smile Blade® Slow Death Rig to be fished at deeper depths and heavier currents than you’ll usually find in fishing for walleyes in other areas.

This required some innovation. And that’s exactly what Mustad and Mack’s Lure have done with the Smile Blade® Super Slow Death Rig. Those overgrown monsters — not all that uncommon on the Columbia — won’t straighten out hooks on this model.

Schmidt and Loomis will tell you the new Super Slow Death hook also has a larger bend. This is something else you’re going to like about it. “The larger bend,” Loomis says, “permits you to run a full length nightcrawler, plastics, or whatever you want to use with it, and the rig will still rotate the way you want it to.”

I’ve already put plenty of fish in my boat with this rig and I’m convinced you will, as well.

MACKSLURE.COM

STAN’S SPACE

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SMILE BLADE® SPINNERS

CATCH MORE WALLEYE
SONIC BAITFISH™ (SBF) TIPS & TECHNIQUES

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

SONIC BAITFISH™ (SBF)

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tipped my SBF with a one inch piece

gave up the purist approach and

can become an active bite. I finally

like this. By adding scent, a dead bite

immediately change a dead bite into

an active one.

On a recent trip to the Gulf of

Mexico off Destin, Fla., I joined three

friends for a flounder trip. Before

heading offshore, the captain made

a quick stop in the pass to buy about

four dozen four-inch mud minnows,

which resemble a chub with its large

head.

Our destination was a low profile,

artificial structure in 70-feet of water.

It was a cloudy, calm day, which

I always prefer. The only variable

working against us was a strong tide

that never slowed down the entire

day. Once we reached our fishing

spot, the skipper never anchored.

Instead, his GPS-controlled bow-

mounted electric motor kept the

boat over our spot. Most boats under

25-feet use this alternative form of

positioning off the Destin region.

Because of the strong tide,

casting up-current was necessary to

reach the bottom where the flounder

were positioned. While the rest of my

fishing buddies were baiting their

sinker rigs with mud minnows, my

bare Sonic BaitFish™ Fire Tiger 1/2

oz. hooked up on its first cast. For the

next hour, the SBF outfished live bait.

Since the SBF is especially effective

on a slow or dead tide, I was waiting

for the tide to slow so I could show

how much more effective the SBF

could be (when the line remains

straight down, without angling off,

while vertical jigging).

Big mistake! It was a full moon tide

and the tide would be rippng the

entire day. At tide change, if there

was any slow down in the current,

I never saw it. Instead of slowing

down, it increased and killed my jig

bite. In the old days, as an offshore

guide, I would have been better

prepared and would have known to

change tactics. Instead, I kept

jigging and watched my boatmates

outfish me.

If I would have listened to my own

teaching, as explained in the SBF

Tech Guide, I would tip my jig in times

like this. By adding scent, a dead bite

can become an active bite. I finally

gave up the purist approach and

tipped my SBF with a one inch piece

of cut bait. It was like immediately

turning night into day. Literally every

drop thereafter producted a fish.

Combining scent with lure

vibration produced an unbeatable

combination. I was back to outfishing

the live bait with two very noticeable

results. Unlike the subtle nibbling

bites that resulted from fishing with

live baitfish, all of my strikes on the

SBF were hard strikes. Secondly, the

live baitfish only produced flounder,

whereas the SBF produced five other

species besides flounder.

My experience that day can

serve as an example of adapting to

conditions that can affect us across

North America. For example, many

Mack Attack readers fish walleye

in the Columbia River. Most of my

walleye fishing was on Lake Erie’s

western basin and inland Ohio

reservoirs. In either case, tipping

a nightcrawler piece dramatically

increased my walleye catches with

the SBF. Whether for walleye or

yellow perch, a worm-tipped SBF is

hard to beat.

Boat control is another important

consideration when metal jig fishing

a SBF:

A) On a slow drift, I will bottom-

bounce a tipped SBF on the

up-current side to prevent my

presentation from going under

the boat. Many times on Lake Erie,

with about a one foot cop, bottom-

bouncing a glow chartreuse SBF

from a rod holder (positioned

parallel to the water) produced

exceptional catches of large walleye.
The rhythm of a fluttering SBF,

produced from

the rod holder, out-fished my

hand-held rod approach.

B) On a fast drift or snaggy

structure, I like to cast directly into

the direction the boat is headed.

Especially in deeper water, this

enables my jig to reach bottom faster

and allow for more time in the strike

zone. For a snaggy bottom, I can

work my jig through the structure

longer. In case of a snag, the lure

can be freed as the boat passes

on the down-current side of the

snag. For any type of fish, especially

positioned near the bottom, the

action produced from the flash of a

fluttering and vibrating SBF on the

fall is the deadliest form of action to

cause a fish to strike!

Thank you for being a subscriber to

the Mack Attack. It is my pleasure to

share these tips with you that have

resulted in plenty of memorable

catches over the years. In February,

I reached my 80th birthday and I’m

shooting for another twenty years of

talking fishing with all of you. Best

wishes for good health and excellent

catches!
Mack’s Lure is proud to introduce the members of our Pro Staff, Guide Staff and VIP Angler programs. These team members ensure our customers get products that have been field proven to catch more fish. Each month, we’ll profile an angler.

— NEXT UP —

MARC CHRISTOPHEL (CA)

Q: Tell us a little about yourself, Marc.

MC: I’m 36, married to my wonderful wife and I have a son that is 3. I reside in Truckee, Calif., which is in the Lake Tahoe area. I started fishing at a very young age and was introduced to the sport by my father and grandfather. I attended college at Chico State and during that time, I focused more on golf than fishing.

When I graduated in 2004, I moved back to to Vacaville, Calif. and I purchased my first boat, a 17-ft. Lund, and the passion for fishing was reignited. Within 3 years, I was offered an opportunity to move to Truckee and I jumped at the chance. I have lived in Truckee for 11 years now and was immediately in love with kokanee fishing in the area lakes.

I was fortunate to have been mentored by a local guide in the area and I quickly became extremely knowledgeable on the local lakes. In 2013, I met Gary Miralles, former owner of Shasta Tackle Company, and began working on his Pro Staff and assisting with sales in the area. Once again, I was fortunate to have the guidance of Gary and the previous local guide, and in 2014 I opened up my guide service, Christophel’s Guide Service, and began what has been an excellent journey.

Q: Which lakes do you typically fish? What time of year?

MC: I fish Donner Lake, Stampede Reservoir and Boca Reservoir, each of which are in the immediate Truckee area. Fishing can be a yearlong event, depending on the amount of snow we receive and whether the lakes are accessible.

We fish through the winter and into spring for lake trout, through the spring for browns and rainbows and we start fishing for kokanee around May and through the summer into fall. The sheer beauty of the area, cool temperatures in the summer and the quality of all these fisheries makes this a big destination area for outdoor enthusiasts.

Q: Do you have any proven, go-to presentations for kokanee fishing?

MC: My absolute, go-to flasher is the Sling Blade™ 4” UV Pink. This particular dodger has been responsible for a ton of my success locally and, often times, at least two rods are rigged with this dodger, if not all four.

In the early season, I get some great responses from the kokanee with a Pee Wee™ Wiggle Hoochie™ in orange with the UV Wiggle Hoochie™ Bill. The erratic action produced drives these fish nuts throughout the early season. As the season progresses, the kokanee begin to move into a “micro bite” and, during that time, a pink Koke-A-Nut™ with a Smile Blade® in front does quite well when these fish are looking for something with a reduced profile. If I need something even smaller, I will trim the ribbon back just a little on the Koke-A-Nut™ for an even smaller profile. Another fantastic lure that proved to be quite deadly last year was the Cha Cha™ 1.5 Kokanee Squidder in orange. This was a very hot lure for kokanee, but also caught our largest wild rainbow. Local shops could barely keep them in stock.

Q: Any additional kokanee fishing tips you would give our readers?

JS: If you are not getting bit, don’t be afraid to change it up! Often times, I see people refuse to put their favorite lure that was working yesterday back into the box to try another one. Kokanee can make a dramatic change in color preference or presentation, even in the matter of hours, so don’t be afraid to try something else.

Speed, colors, depth, scent and leader length are all key factors with kokanee, so change these variables up, as well. Also, get to know your local guides, as they can be a big help. I, personally, am not shy about giving advice at the boat ramp, and you will probably find guides in your area to be the same way. Lastly, have fun, relax, and enjoy yourself.

WALLEYE FISHING BANKS LAKE IN WASHINGTON STATE

DANNY COYNE, MACK’S LURE PRO STAFF | BCFISHN

For the serious walleye angler, Banks Lake has to be on the bucket list. Located in Grant and Douglas County in Washington State, it sits a mere five minutes south of Grand Coulee Dam and offers one of the best walleye fisheries in the entire state. Small, but plentiful walleye make this a great destination area for outdoor enthusiasts.
Pacific Northwest. For Canadian anglers, the drive is only 2.5 hours from the Osoyoos border crossing.

Stretching close to 27 miles, Banks Lake offers fantastic walleye fishing throughout all regions of the lake, from March through October.

The pre-spawn season starts near the end of February and really starts to heat up in mid-March. The north end of the lake near Electric City and Steamboat Rock are great areas to pursue these early season walleye. Once the water temperature hits over 43 degrees, the walleye start to spawn and the fishing slows down for a couple weeks, usually the first part of April.

It is highly recommended and good fishing ethics to release the spawning female walleye during this period. This way, they can complete their spawn to sustain this amazing fishery. But don’t worry — there are plenty of decent-sized male walleye between 15- and 19-inches willing to bite. The current limit of walleye for Banks Lake is 8 fish per day, per angler — and a retention slot size limit of 12- to 22-inches; one fish can be over 22-inches.

As May approaches, the large females have completed their spawn and become active again. Sticking around the north end of the lake near Steamboat Rock until early summer will help you improve your odds in locating fish. As the summer and fall move in, the fish will be found throughout the entire lake.

The most effective way to target these fish is by bottom bounce trolling with a variety of Mack’s Lure walleye setups, such as the Wally Pop® and spinners equipped with Smile Blades® and Slow Death Hooks. The bait bait of choice is, hands down, good old dew worms. Adding scents to your baits, such as Pro Cure Trophy Walleye, will give those stubborn fish something they can’t resist.

Trolling speed is critical, like in all walleye fisheries. In the early spring, start off trolling less than 1 mph and, as the temperatures rise, increase your speed. The best way to find out what the optimum speed is to start slow and increase until fish strike.

Banks also offers all of the amenities and accomodations to make your trip the perfect excursion. There are numerous boat launch, camping and facility options for you to use. It’s furry and experience that all anglers should take advantage of and enjoy. You’ll be in awe.

Have a question? We’d love to answer it for you! Shoot us an email at media@mackslure.com with your question and you may see it featured in an upcoming issue of the Mack Attack Magazine!

Q: I’ve heard the term “pop gear” from a lot of people recently. What are they talking about?

A: That’s a great question! Pop gear is another name for a gang troll, which can be used in an assortment of ways when trolling. They generally consist of a wire leader that can have anywhere from two to six baldes that spin to create extra flash and attractoin to a line.

Some of the older “pop gear” is normally heavy and can really weigh your rod down, which creates an illusion of a heavy fish or no fish at all.

Mack’s Lure carries a variety of gang trolls called Flash Lite® Trolls or Hot Wings®. The Flash Lite® is our gang troll that offers both versatility and added attraction, which allows you to catch more fish. The blades themselves are similar to our Smile Blade®, which is made of lightweight mylar plastic, reducing the amount of drag to your rod by 85 percent.

The Hot Wings® are smaller in size when an angler wants a lower profile in the water column. The blades also counter-rotate to increase flash and attraction, as well.

Gang trolls can be used in-line with normally a 2- to 3-foot leader when using an in-line spinner such as a Wedding Ring®. You can also use a Flash Lite® or Hot Wings® just above a Double D™ Dodger, which not only provides rotation to the blades, but the side-to-side action that a dodger provides. You can find several sizes and colors on our website or at your local tackle and bait shop.
Mack’s Lure’s Bob Schmidt is joined by Pro Staffer Keith Jensen on Banks Lake for a highly instructional episode of walleye fishing on Banks Lake pres. by Angler West TV.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Mack’s Lure Pro Staffer and Professional Angler Mike Hall shows off a Kokanee caught on the Flaming Gorge using a Double D™ Dodger and a Smile Blade® setup.

PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE HALL

VIDEO OF THE MONTH

Mack’s Lure’s Bob Schmidt is joined by Pro Staffer Keith Jensen on Banks Lake for a highly instructional episode of walleye fishing on Banks Lake pres. by Angler West TV.

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